

Application for Erie County Executive Energy Achievement Award

March 15, 2005

Name of Project:

“Creative Campaigns for Raising Campus Energy Awareness”

Organization:

The State University of New York, University at Buffalo,

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Dates of project conception and completion:

2004 – present. On-going effort.

Initial condition that first caused the project to be considered:

UB has a nationally recognized energy conservation program which is credited with annual savings in excess of \$9 million and cumulative savings in excess of \$100 million since the program's inception in the late 1970s. Unique among campuses is the 100% commitment of University Facilities to achieving energy conservation savings and serving as responsible environment stewards. UB's program consists of a aggressive mix of activity on numerous fronts, including:

- Energy conservation for campus physical plant operations
- Capital improvements to improve building energy systems, power plant and chilled water plant efficiency
- Large comprehensive self-financing energy projects
- Campus energy policies
- Green, environmentally-friendly building design for new construction and renovation projects
- Energy awareness outreach directed at the wider campus community

All of these efforts are interrelated and on-going. They mutually reinforce each other.

We realize that energy awareness raising is never done and we are constantly striving to develop new campaigns to keep the energy issue before students, faculty and staff. Promoting energy awareness well is a challenge.

Initial goal of the project:

Reinvigorate campus energy awareness and especially to raise awareness about saving energy with computers.

What steps were taken?

UB launched two energy awareness campaigns in 2004: “You Have the Power” (by the UB Green Office) and “Do It in the Dark” (by UB Computing and Information Technology, CIT, with support from UB Green and UB Residence Life and Apartments). Both campaigns sought to use creative means to get attention and maximize participation.

“You Have the Power” was inspired by savings of \$ 11,000 which were achieved during one day in August 2003 when UB was asked to reduce electrical demand because of an overloaded grid. Those single day savings were so striking (they would amount to over \$300,000 a month if they could be sustained over the course of 30 days) that we used them to rally more support for our energy conservation program.

“You Have the Power” conveys an empowerment message and encourages all members of the University community to take action in their office, classroom, or lab. Numerous energy saving steps are presented via an attractive brochure with a striking light switch image created by an artist (Becky Farnum) from UB Creative Services. The light switch image was carried over to the large poster which can be seen throughout UB’s North and South Campuses. The brochure was printed on 100% post consumer content recycled paper and distributed to 5,000 UB staff and faculty members last fall. In a cover letter, we invited suggestions and complaints about energy waste on campus and followed up on all of them. One professor from the medical school called and suggested that corridor lighting could be reduced to half levels during the evening and on weekends without undermining safety. We successfully tested the concept with the dean and with campus police. This measure is now being implemented by student assistants with projected saving in excess of \$10,000. We also asked environmental liaisons in 170 campus offices and departments to discuss the campaign with their colleagues in order to maximize participation.

This campaign included the creation of a special website, <http://www.buffalo.edu/youhavethepower/>. This site includes information about campus and home energy savings techniques and methods. It also contains a section on campus and global energy facts and a link to the UB Green “Green Power Buyers Guide” to encourage members of the UB community to buy green power for their homes.

The “Do It in the Dark” campaign is an extension of a larger program which was initiated at UB in 2004 to enable power management features on computer monitors throughout the university. With help from the NYSERDA-funded Energy Smart Office Program, the UB Green Office and UB’s Computing and Information Technology (CIT) unit launched a multi-faceted campus computer energy conservation program to enable power management features on computer monitors in UB’s public computing labs and cybaries, in departmental labs and networks, and for students – both resident (who live in UB dorms and apartments) and commuter.

There are an estimated 17,000 computers at UB. These computers use over \$600,000 worth of energy annually. Over the years, our green computing program has been successful in

getting faculty and staff computer users to turn off computers at night and on weekends. We have been less successful in getting computer users to enable the power management features on their computers so that computers and monitors go into an energy saving sleep mode when not actively in use (which can be 75% of the time). This sleep mode can reduce computer energy use by 95% during periods when the computers are idle and allowed to “sleep.”

The “Do It in the Dark” campaign was specifically developed to reach students and encourage them to enable the power management features on their computer monitors. The name of the campaign was chosen to be slightly risqué to capture student interest. The campaign was publicized on campus through a variety of means including 7,000 e-mail messages and website announcements to students, large banners hung in the student union and on campus buildings, etc.

“Do It in the Dark” functions in the student realm of cyberspace. It has its own website, <http://www.buffalo.edu/inthedark/>. The site explains the campaign, provides downloads to make it easy for students to enable monitor power management features, advertises campaign promotional gifts, and shows the smiling face of the latest winner of an iPod mini MP3 player. To be eligible to win the iPod (or 19 inch flat panel monitor grand prize) students must electronically register, download energy saving software, answer a brief questionnaire about saving energy, and wear a “Do It in the Dark” T-shirt or button while on campus. An iPod mini winner is picked each month by being spotted on campus wearing the T-shirt or button.

To date, an estimated 1,000 students are participating in the program. Annual energy savings are estimated to be \$14,000. This program is unique in its ability to reach and involve students who are often apathetic or too distracted to get involved in campus energy or environmental programs.

What obstacles were encountered?

The main obstacle was the challenge of coming up with something fresh and engaging. We have been doing energy awareness at UB for over twenty years. To keep people interested, the program must continue evolving, changing, gaining people’s attention, and capturing their imagination. It can be difficult to figure out a new angle or approach.

Also, the UB campuses are like small cities. A great many things are going on and it can be difficult to cut through all the competing interests, events, and noise to get the attention of faculty, students, and staff. Both “You Have the Power” and “Do It in the Dark” are creative, edgy, attention-grabbing and different enough to reach out, connect, and work on our busy campuses.

What support did the project receive?

Funding for both projects was modest and came primarily from the UB Green and CIT budgets. “Do It in the Dark” also received donated promotional items, e.g. computer screen from Dell.

What about payback?

Energy awareness programs don't have paybacks in the conventional sense because it is difficult or impossible to measure actual savings produced when an unknown number of people take action privately. We believe that these programs engaged many members of the UB community and thus were cost-effective, more than returning their costs with energy savings.

Moreover, high visibility campaigns like these convey and remind all members of the UB community that we are committed to being a green campus. That leads to more participation in all our green campus programs including recycling, use of 100% post consumer content recycled paper, etc. When the UB Green Office or University Facilities asks for cooperation on a specific energy or environmental project, we usually get it because members of the UB community are well aware that UB is committed to environmental responsibility.

What are the results of these energy awareness programs?

As previously stated, there is no way to accurately quantify the saving from programs of this kind. Given UB's nearly \$20 million a year in energy costs, consider that even if they produce only a 1% savings, that translates into \$200,000 in energy dollar savings annually.

What would we do differently in the future?

We might begin with focus groups to discover attitudes, barriers, and what it would take to get people's attention, and, more importantly, to elicit participation and action. With "You Have the Power," we could have had more follow-up with individual offices and departments once the materials went out. That would have been helpful in maximizing the benefits of the campaign.

The "Do It in the Dark" campaign relies heavily on e-mail messages which is both a plus (its easy and students expect e-mail communication) and a minus (everyone is so bombarded by e-mail and spam that it is easy to dismiss unsolicited messages, even if well intended). So the challenge is to find other means of communicating or to make campaign e-mails stand out, get opened, and responded to.

Most positive secondary outcome?

Both campaigns give additional visibility to the UB Green office, our advocacy efforts, and the University's overall commitment to becoming a genuinely energy efficient and green campus.

Are we currently purchasing green energy?

UB has been a state leader in the purchasing of green power through out the period 2002-2004. During 2004, we purchased 12,000,000 kilowatt hours of wind energy from the Fenner wind farm near Syracuse, N.Y. We are currently seeking contract approval to continue those purchases in 2005.

We have actively promoted clean wind energy. In conjunction with our "You Have the Power" campaign, we sent all UB faculty and staff a brochure which offered a \$20 rebate to any UB community member who purchased wind energy for their home from Community Energy, UB's wind energy provider. A few years ago, the UB Green Office organized a

coalition of 20 local community groups (called, “WNY Green Power Is Clean Power”) to promote the use of green power.

Are we willing to mentor?

Yes, enthusiastically. We are committed to mentoring to the max. The UB Green website, <http://wings.buffalo.edu/ubgreen/>, receives 10,000 visits a month, 50% of which are from off-campus. We use the website as a vehicle for sharing what we do and the resources we have developed with green campus activists and leaders at other campuses and schools nationally and internationally. We also regularly send out informational packets to other campuses. We often host delegations from other campuses and provide them with a day-long tutorial. UB green staff convey the energy conservation and green campus messages and resources through presentations at regional and national conferences. We also speak at area colleges, e.g. a recent talk on green building design to student designers at Buffalo State College; an upcoming Earth Day presentation at Daemen College on how to organize and effective green campus program.

May you post/publish our project?

Yes, please.